Interreg
Danube Transnational Programme
EUROPEAN UNION

Applicants Manual

for the period 2014-2020

Version 1

PART 1: DANUBE TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMME

edited by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat
Budapest, Hungary, 2015

Disclaimer

This document was endorsed by the Danube Programming Committee on 14th August 2015. However, please note that it is still subject to final approval by the Monitoring Committee to be established within three months of the date of notification of the European Commission decision adopting the Cooperation Programme.

A stream of cooperation

PART 1: DANUBE TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMME

I.	Programme overview	3
II.	Programme priorities and Specific Objectives	3
III.	Programme area	5
IV.	Programme budget	6
V.	Legal framework	6
VI.	Management structure	8
VII.	Programme link with the EUSDR	10

I. Programme overview

The Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) is a financing instrument with a specific scope and an independent decision making body. The DTP supports the policy **integration in the Danube area** in selected fields under the CPR/ERDF Regulations. The strategic vision is "policy integration" in specific fields of action below the EU-level (not duplicating efforts in policy integration at the EU-level e.g. TEN-T) and above the national level. Transnational projects should influence national, regional and local policies (policy driver).

In order to achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of the very heterogeneous Danube region, the transnational cooperation programme will act as a **policy driver** aiming to tackle the common challenges and needs deriving from specific policy fields. Therefore, transnational cooperation is expected to deliver tangible results through the **development and practical implementation of policy frameworks, tools and services**. To this end, the programme looks to promote concrete pilot investments.

Current needs are related to the issues on how to improve institutional frameworks for cooperation, how to improve the quality of policies and their delivery and how to deliver solutions through smart pilot action. The success of the programme implementation will depend on targeted selection of the most relevant interventions and a further increase in the efficiency of administrative procedures and a reduction of the administrative burden for the beneficiaries.

II. Programme priorities and Specific Objectives[1]

The programme builds on four priorities of particular relevance to Danube Region. These are further broken down to specific objectives and respond to the programme area's challenges and needs or build on opportunities identified in the analysis included in the Danube Transnational Programme document.

Projects to be funded in the framework of the programme will have to address one of the specific objectives formulated under each priority of the programme.

[1] Programme intervention logic is detailed in Annex I

Priority Axis 1

Innovative and socially responsible Danube region

Specific objective 1.1

Improve framework conditions for innovation

Specific objective 1.2

Increase competences for business and social innovation

Priority Axis 2

Environment and culture responsible Danube region

Specific objective 2.1

Strengthen transnational water management and flood risk prevention

Specific objective 2.2

Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources

Specific objective 2.3

Foster the restoration and management of ecological corridors

Specific objective 2.4

Improve preparedness for environmental risk management

Priority Axis 3

Better connected and energy responsible Danube region

Specific objective 3.1

Support environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas

Specific objective 3. 2

Improve energy security and energy efficiency

Priority Axis 4

Well governed Danube region

Specific objective 4.1

Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges

Specific objective 4.2

Support to the governance and implementation of the EUSDR

III. Programme area

The programme area covers **nine Member States** (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany with two lands Baden-Württemberg and Bayern, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and **five non-EU Member States** (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and Ukraine with four provinces: Chernivetska Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast, Odessa Oblast), being composed of 69 NUTS2 regions.

Geographically, the DTP area overlaps with the territory addressed by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), comprising also the Danube river basin and the mountainous areas (such as the Carpathians, the Balkans and part of the Alps). It is the most international river basin in the world. The area makes up one fifth of the EU's territory and it is inhabited by approximately 114 million people. The variety of natural environment, the socio-economic differences and cultural diversity of the various parts of the area may be perceived as major challenges, but actually represent important opportunities and unexploited potential.

Figure1. Programme area

IV. Programme budget

The implementation of Danube Transnational Programme will be supported by the European Union with an allocation of **EUR 221,924,597.00**, originating from two main sources: **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF EUR 202,095,405.00)** and the **Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA EUR 19,829,192.00).** These amounts will be complemented by the **national contributions** of the countries participating in the programme. Individual projects will receive the Union support up to 85% of their total eligible costs. The distribution of allocations from the Union sources among the Priority Axis is as follows:

Priority Axes (PA)	ERDF	IPA	Total
PA 1: Innovative and socially responsible Danube region	56.586.713,00	5.459.759,00	62.046.472,00
PA 2: Environment and culture responsible Danube region	64.670.530,00	6.239.725,00	70.910.255,00
PA 3: Better connected and energy responsible Danube region	42.440.035,00	4.094.820,00	46.534.855,00
PA 4: Well governed Danube region	26.272.403,00	2.534.888,00	28.807.291,00
PA 5: Technical Assistance	12.125.724,00	1.500.000,00	13.625.724,00

More information regarding the financial appropriations of the DTP can be found in **Section 3 Financing Plan of the Cooperation Programme.**

V. Legal framework

The Danube Transnational Programme was developed taking into consideration the broad policy framework channelling the development efforts on macro-regional, national and regional levels.

Please note: The relevant documents listed below are provided on the DTP website. The list is not exhaustive.

- *Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme document adopted by the European Commission on*
- *Structural Funds Regulations:*
  - Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional

Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

- Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006
- Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal.

➢ *IPA Regulation*:

- Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II)
- Regulation (EU) 447/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II)
- REGULATION (EU) No 236/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014, Common Implementing Regulation for External Actions

➢ *EGTC Regulation:*

- Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings

➢ *Strategic framework:*

- The **Europe 2020 Strategy** is focusing on the three pillars of the concept of growth: smart, sustainable and inclusive. The EU 2020 Strategy is an instrument meant to coordinate the national and EU level policies in order to generate and maintain development at EU level and help the EU become the most competitive economy in the world by 2020. The mechanism needed for achieving the above-mentioned goals includes the National Reform Programmes which are containing the objectives set up at national level in pursuing the EU 2020 objectives.
- The **Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020** - Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions (TA2020) is set to provide strategic orientations for territorial development, fostering integration of territorial dimension within different policies at all governance levels and to ensure implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy according to territorial cohesion principles.
- The **South-East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE 2020)** was launched by the participating countries in 2011, as recognition of the fact that close cooperation can accelerate the attainment of key goals in specific field of action. Inspired by Europe

2020 Strategy, the SEE 2020 is pursuing similar objectives taking into account the regional specificities. The document provides important strategic guidance for the non- Member States from Western Balkans, in achieving a higher degree of convergence with the goals of EU2020.

- The **European Union Strategy for the Danube Region** Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - COM(2010) 715 final

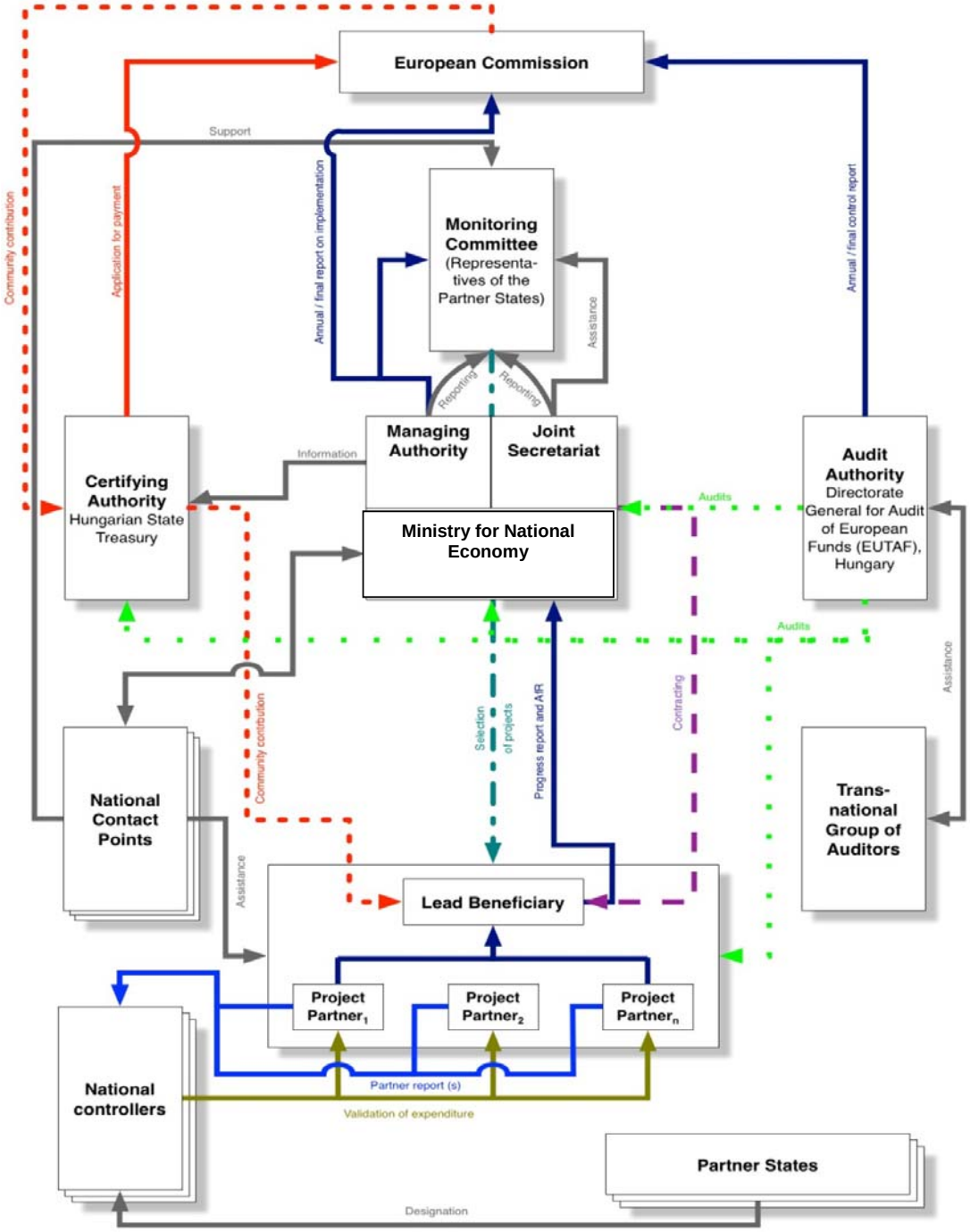
Other programme documents and relevant information

Additionally, thematic policy frameworks were reflected in order to best address the needs in given sectors. Consequently, the design of the programme took into consideration the goals identified in specific thematic fields as follows (the list is not exhaustive):

- EU Water Framework Directive (2000)
- TEN-T Connecting Europe
- EU Biodiversity strategy (2011)
- Prioritised Action Frameworks for NATURA2000
- EU 7th Environmental Action Programme
- EU Climate and energy package
- Energy efficiency plans / SET plans
- SME Small Business Act
- EU Smart Specialisation Platform
- The Danube Innovation Partnership
- European Research Area, Strategic Research Agendas developed under the Joint Programming Initiatives
- Western Balkan R&D Strategy for Innovation – WISE (drafted with World Bank / RCC to monitor progress.

VI. Management structure

The Danube Transnational Programme will use a shared management system to manage, coordinate and supervise its implementation, meaning that the Partner States and the Commission will be responsible for the management and control of the programme.



The **Monitoring Committee (MC),** consisting of the representatives of each participating country, supervises the implementation of the DTP and selects the projects to be financed. Its overall task is to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the overall programme

implementation process. To fulfil this task the MC is going to be assisted by the Joint Secretariat (JS).

The **Managing Authority (MA),** assisted by the **Joint Secretariat** hosted by the Ministry for National Economy of Hungary, is responsible for the overall programme implementation by carrying out the functions laid down in Article 125 of the CPR as well as Article 23 of the ETC Regulation. The JS will be the central contact point for potential project applicants and Lead Partners of selected/running operations.

The **Certifying Authority (CA)** is responsible for drawing up and submitting certified statements of expenditure and applications for payment to the European Commission and receiving payments from the EC. The CA shall use the payments received from the EC to reimburse the Lead Partners in accordance with Article 132 of the CPR.

The **Audit Authority (AA)** is responsible for ensuring that audits are done in the framework of the management and control systems and are based on an appropriate sample of operations and on the annual accounts. The AA will be assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) comprising the representatives of responsible bodies of each Partner State.

National Contact Points (NCPs) will be set up by each participating country to complement transnational activities of the MA and the JS and by involving stakeholders from the national level as well as to contribute to the national and transnational programme management and provide guidance and advice to potential applicants and project partners.

The **Lead Partners (LPs)**, located in one of the DTP EU Member States, will be designated by all the partners participating in a project to carry out the tasks laid down in Article 13 of the ETC Regulation. In particular, the LP shall assume responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.

First Level Controllers (FLC) will be designated by each Partner State to ensure the compliance of expenditure incurred by the project partners with the Community and national rules, by carrying out verifications within the meaning of Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation as well as Article 125(5) of the CPR, covering administrative, financial, technical and physical aspects of operations. Controllers shall be nominated in line with the national provisions of each Partner State. Each country participating in the DTP will be responsible for verifications carried out on its territory.

VII. Programme link with the EUSDR

Macro-regional strategies and Transnational Cooperation Programmes

Within the EU regional policy, macro-regional strategies significantly gained importance over the last years. Several macro-regions were identified throughout the European territory, covering large areas across national borders. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

(EUSBSR) was adopted in October 2009; the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) started its implementation in June 2011**; the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was endorsed by the European Commission in 2012; and the EU Strategy for Alpine Space Region (EUSALP) is currently being developed. Discussion about possible other future European macro-regional strategies are on-going.

Given their identical geographical scope, the difference of macro-regional strategies and respective transnational cooperation programmes might not seem obvious at first glance. However, it should be highlighted that:

- **Macro regional strategies are not funding instruments**. A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework (endorsed by the European Council), which may be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds among others, to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area relating to Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. They rather seek to create synergies and coordination between existing policies, funding instruments and initiatives taking place across a given macro region

- **Transnational cooperation programmes like the DTP are funding instruments** contributing to the realisation of different EU policies and strategies, including macro-regional strategies. Yet, for either policy or (macro-regional) strategy they are **only one instrument among further funding opportunities**

- Transnational cooperation programmes and macro regional strategies are based on **different policy and/or legal frameworks**, defining – amongst other - different sets of rules, thematic priorities, internal governance structures and administrative procedures

How the EUSDR works

The Danube Region Strategy addresses a wide range of issues; these are divided among **4 pillars** and **11 priority areas** (see image below). The **EUSDR Action Plan** presents operational objectives, projects and actions for each priority area. In addition, concrete **targets** are defined for each priority area. Each priority area is managed by 2 **Priority Area Coordinators (PACs)**. Steering groups advise and assist the work of the PACs. Further to that, some priority areas created working groups around sub-themes and tasks. The **National Coordinators (NCs)** coordinate the participation of their country in the implementation of the EUSDR. The role of the NC is to promote the Strategy and inform relevant stakeholders on the national level of key developments. The EUSDR website (www.danube-region.eu) provides general information about the EUSDR, its governance, priority areas and PACs, targets per priority area, funding opportunities and key documents.

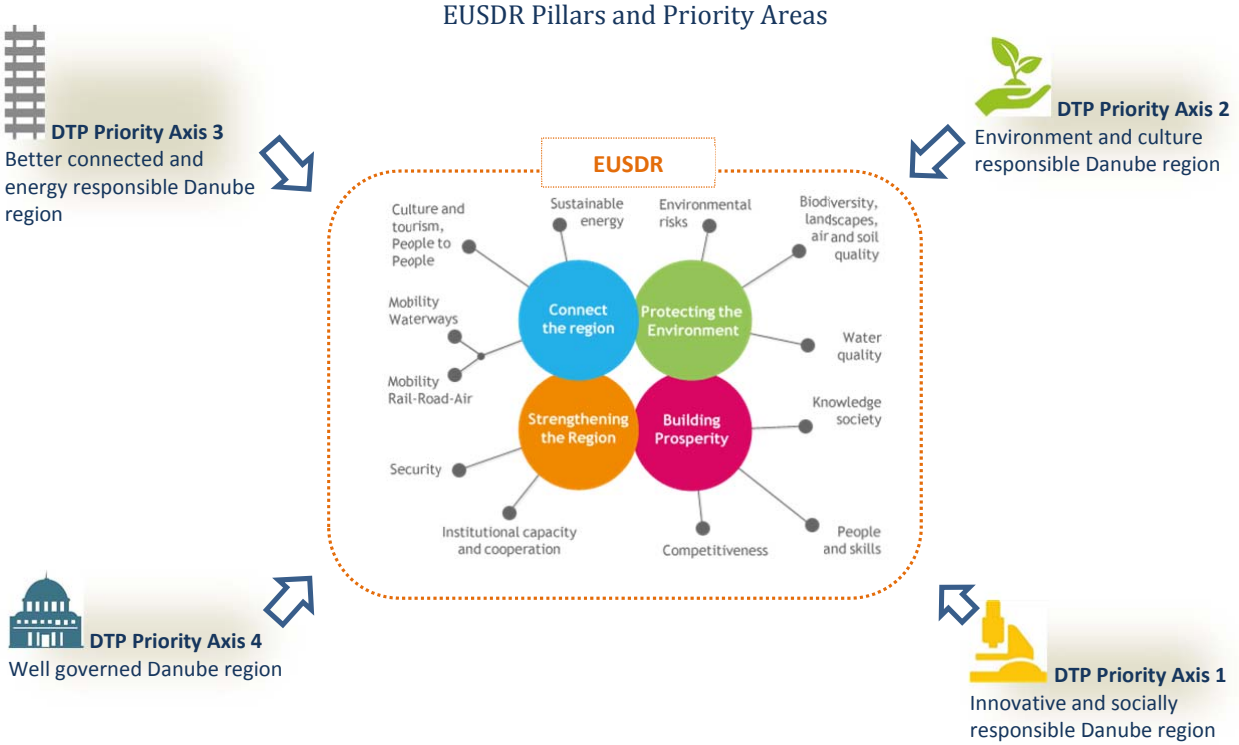
Contributions of DTP projects to the EUSDR

The set-up of the DTP thoroughly considered the EUSDR. As one result of the close alignment of DTP and EUSDR, **all DTP Priority Axis and related Specific Objectives show direct linkages**

to the pillars of one or more EUSDR Priority Areas (see also the DTP Cooperation Programme chapter 4.4.1). However, not all eleven EUSDR Priority Areas are equally reflected by the DTP due to the thematic concentration[2] applied to all territorial cooperation programmes in the EU programming period 2014 – 2020.

Thematic linkages between DTP and EUSDR

EUSDR Pillars and Priority Areas



Please note: Expected contributions of DTP projects to the EUSDR

- Applicants are expected to describe the link to the relevant EUSDR Priority Area(s) and the concrete contribution to the implementation of the Priority Area(s), as well as the contribution toward achievement of the EUSDR current targets and/or corresponding actions, as described in the official list of targets and actions (http://www.danube-region.eu/component/edocman/action-plan-eusdr-pdf)
- The applicant is also advised to check the websites of the specific Priority Areas in order to better understand how the proposal can contribute to the EUSDR (http://www.danube-region.eu/about/priorities).

[2] According to Art.4 of the Reg.1301/ 2013

Linking DTP-projects to the EUSDR will require a sound knowledge about the EUSDR. Therefore, applicants should use all available sources of information, be it through the above mentioned web-links, direct contact with EUSDR representatives (PACs, Priority Area Steering Group members, National Coordinators or other) or by visiting EUSDR events. Finally, applicants being in contact with their respective DTP National Contact Point during the preparation phase of their project might also use this opportunity for getting fruitful advice and guidance.